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C O N F I D E N T I A L HELSINKI 000127

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/IET, EUR/NB, INR/EAP

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SUBJECT: ACEH: FINNISH MEDIATOR AHTISAARI PLEASSED WITH  
FIRST ROUND OF GOI/GAM TALKS

REF: A. JAKARTA 0564

[1](#)B. STOCKHOLM 086

Classified By: POLOFF DAVID ALLEN SCHLAEFER FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

[1](#)1. (C) Poloff on January 30 spoke with former Finnish President Ahtisaari's special assistant Kristiina Rinkineva. Ahtisaari is the head of Finland's Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), a conflict-resolution think tank, and had agreed to hosting a meeting of GAM and GoI representatives after being approached by a Finnish businessman with strong ties to Indonesia. Rinkineva, who accompanied Ahtisaari during the negotiating sessions, said that both she and Ahtisaari believed the initial round of talks had "probably been more positive than we expected." She said that the GoI and GAM representatives had met face-to-face twice, once on January 28 and again during a lengthy session on January 29. Rinkineva opined that the mere fact that the two sides were able to meet in the same room and conduct a civilized discussion was a "significant victory." During one session, Ahtisaari and Rinkineva left the room and the GoI and GAM leaders held a lengthy private discussion. She said that there appeared to be a general agreement on both sides to end the military conflict in Aceh and work toward a peace settlement.

[1](#)2. (C) Rinkineva told Poloff that while both sides seemingly expressed a genuine desire to end hostilities and reach a lasting solution, they differed on the means to achieve this. The GoI representatives wanted to talk immediately about a comprehensive settlement. They were less enthusiastic about a "staged" agreement that would eventually normalize the situation in Aceh. However, the GAM leaders envisioned a more gradual process, beginning with an immediate ceasefire in Aceh, followed by negotiations on an amnesty for exiled GAM leaders and fighters, and then talks about Aceh's political future. Rinkineva said that the GAM leaders stuck to this line throughout the discussions. Although the two sides differed on approach, Rinkineva reported that Ahtisaari had said that they "shared the same goal, but simply by two separate roads," and further remarked that he (Ahtisaari) did not believe the GAM leaders were under any illusions about the "weak hand" that they held in the negotiations.

[1](#)3. (C) Rinkineva said that the talks had then moved on to whether an enhanced autonomous status for Aceh could be the framework for a comprehensive settlement, with the GAM leaders "probing the limits" of just what such an enhanced status might mean. At that point, however, both sides felt the need to consult with their respective authorities and Ahtisaari ended the discussions. Although there had originally been plans for a third session on the morning of the 30th, the talks had progressed more quickly than expected, and Ahtisaari believed it best to allow both sides time for consultation before continuing.

[1](#)4. (C) Ahtisaari invited both sides to a second round of talks in Helsinki in the near future; Rinkineva said that the GAM and GoI representatives agreed, although the timeframe has not yet been established. Ahtisaari released a brief public statement on the talks on January 29. An English translation of the statement's text can be found on the CMI's website at [www.cmi.fi](http://www.cmi.fi).

MACK